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COPY NO.

19

W.M. (40) 18th CONCLUSIONS, MINUTE 10.

Confidential Annex.

SCANDINAVIA.

Previous Reference:  
W.M.(40)16th Conclusions,  
Minute 9).

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had seen the Swedish and Norwegian Ministers on the previous day in accordance with the Conclusions of the War Cabinet at the meeting referred to in the margin. The former had expressed himself as personally in complete agreement with the arguments put to him, and would telegraph for permission to pay a visit to Stockholm in order to put his views before his Government. The Norwegian Minister had not reacted too badly to the suggestion that the Norwegian Government should themselves lay a minefield in their territorial waters. But he did not delude himself into believing that the Norwegian Government were likely to accept this suggestion.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL observed that, according to a report in the "Manchester Guardian" of the 18th January, the Swedes had recently concluded an agreement with Germany to ship ~~less~~ more iron ore to them in the future than they had ever done in the past. If this were true, it disclosed a very different situation from that which had been represented by M. Wallenberg.

French views on Policy in Scandinavia and Finland.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had had an interview with the French Ambassador the previous day, from which it appeared that the French were much concerned that we had done nothing to stop the Narvik traffic. It would probably be necessary to hold a meeting

of the Supreme War Council in the near future to discuss the whole question of our policy in Scandinavia and Finland.

Capture of the Northern Ore Fields in the face of Scandinavian Opposition.

The War Cabinet then turned to consideration of a Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the practicability of the capture of the northern ore fields in the face of Scandinavian opposition (W.P.(40) 24).

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that the Chiefs of Staff were of opinion that it would be possible, though probably difficult, to land a force at Narvik in the face of opposition, and ultimately even to break through Norwegian and Swedish opposition on the route to Galivare. But this could not be done in time to forestall the Germans in the ore fields during the coming Spring. As a practical proposition, therefore, the whole operation must be ruled out.

Authority required for detailed Plans and Preparations.

The War Cabinet next considered a Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the instructions and authority which the Service Departments required to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made for various operations in Scandinavia which were under consideration (W.P.(40) 23).

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF explained that the three operations in northern Scandinavia, southern Norway and southern Sweden were all closely inter-connected, and that the Chiefs of Staff had therefore dealt with them in one comprehensive paper. He emphasised the large commitment which would be involved in the provision of the necessary shipping. At the present time we had no personnel ships immediately available to convey the forces required for any of the operations. Those used for the British Expeditionary Force in France were not suitable, owing to the length of the voyage and the adverse weather conditions which must be expected.

Shipping Problem.

The shipping required for the initial Narvik force of two brigades would not be very large, but it would increase as the size of the force grew from two brigades to two divisions. The shipping required for despatch of a force to the ports in Southern Norway was also not very much; only five battalions and ancillary troops would require to be transported. The force for south Sweden, however, would be a very much larger commitment. Some 80,000 men and 10,000 M.T. vehicles would have to be shipped. If a single base at Trondheim only were used, 12 liners for personnel, ~~18~~<sup>16</sup> M.T. ships, 6 store ships, 3 petrol ships and 3 ammunition ships would be needed, and it would take 60 days to put the force ashore. By using Namsos, a port about 100 miles north of Trondheim, as a subsidiary base, it would be possible to reduce the time to 30 days, but the amount of shipping required would be almost double. The net loss of carrying capacity involved in taking up this amount of shipping would be about ~~100~~<sup>150</sup>,000 dead weight tons.

The Chiefs of Staff had worked on the assumption that the forces would be sent in April, and if this was to be done a decision would be required very soon. Liners at present earmarked for the transport of the Australian Expeditionary Force would have to be used, their places being taken by larger ships such as the QUEEN MARY and the MAURETANIA.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF explained that the initial force proposed for southern

Sweden amounted to 2 divisions, i.e. some 24,000 fighting men. The remainder of the 80,000 were required for the base and lines of communication.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY observed that it was of some comfort to see from these figures the very large commitment which the Germans would assume if they undertook the invasion of southern Sweden.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER pointed out that the Chiefs of Staff had only been asked to state what instructions and authority the Service Departments would require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made. The last paragraph of their Report, however, asked for immediate authority for taking certain steps. This seemed to be somewhat premature, since the whole conception of operations in Scandinavia was based on the assumption that we should have the co-operation of the Scandinavian countries, which in fact we had not yet obtained.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF agreed that the wording of the last paragraph was misleading, but pointed out that if the forces were to be ready to act in April, certain decisions would be required in the immediate future. For example, a decision to retain the 44th and 42nd Divisions from the III Corps would have to be taken by the 2nd February. The taking up of shipping, however, might be deferred until a little later.

THE PRIME MINISTER enquired whether it would make any difference to our preparations if the three

operations were undertaken simultaneously or at different times. For example, assuming that we had the full co-operation of Sweden, would the Galivare force be needed at all?

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that if we put in a force at Narvik to hold the Galivare fields it was at least possible that the Germans would invade southern Scandinavia. We should have to be ready, simultaneously with, or even a little before, the despatch of the Narvik force to obtain control of the ports in southern Norway. We should also have to be in a position to offer immediate assistance to Sweden in the south. Even if we had the full co-operation of Sweden, we should have to send a force to the Galivare area to protect it against the possibility of a Russian attack or a German landing at Lulea. We could not depend on the Swedes doing this for themselves without our assistance.

It was generally agreed that all three forces must be ready to move simultaneously, and that preparations should be made accordingly.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR emphasised that the greatest danger from Germany in south Sweden was probably that of air attack. The assistance which we could give, however, against this form of attack was very limited.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was necessary to make full preparations for sending forces to Scandinavia, but that their chief value might well be as a bargaining counter with the Swedes. He was anxious not to divert too much effort and money to the preparation of forces which might not be used after all. Subject to this consideration, however, we should advance our plans and preparations as far as possible.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF pointed out that the Narvik force to seize the Galivare fields would have to operate under winter conditions, since it must arrive in the area before the ice broke in the Baltic. Otherwise the Germans might forestall it by a sea-borne expedition to Lulea. A good deal of special equipment

"THE MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO asked whether the Army and Air Forces proposed were considered by the Chiefs of Staff to be adequate, in conjunction with the available Swedish forces, to defend Sweden against an attack by Germany and Russia.

THE CHIEF OF THE IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF replied that an Appreciation of the numbers for that purpose could not be given without conversations with the Swedish General Staff." It seemed very doubtful whether we should ever get started Conversations with Sweden.

There was some discussion about the arrangements before the holding of the meeting of the Supreme War Council at which plans for action in Scandinavia would be discussed. The following were the principal points which emerged:-

- (i) It was open to question whether the French realised fully that operations on a large scale in Scandinavia next May would involve a considerable diversion of our effort from France. If the 44th and 42nd Divisions, which were now earmarked for France, were not retained in England, it would be difficult to find the necessary troops for Scandinavia.
- (ii) General Gamelin had himself informed the Chief of the Imperial General Staff that he was prepared to provide one brigade of Chasseurs Alpins for the Narvik expedition.
- (iii) It would be preferable that operations in Scandinavia should be primarily a British responsibility. Administrative difficulties would be increased if large numbers of French troops were sent as well as British.
- (iv) It might be possible to obtain some of the shipping required from the French, who might also be asked to make some contribution towards the cost.
- (v) It would be necessary to work out our plans in greater detail, and to be clear as to the full implications of a Scandinavian campaign before discussing with the French the question of the division of responsibility between the Allies.

(vi) The taking up of shipping should be deferred until the whole question had been discussed with the French.

The War Cabinet —

- (i) Approved the Report by the Chiefs of Staff on the possibility of capturing the northern ore fields in the face of Scandinavian opposition (W.P.(40) 24):
- (ii) Approved the Report by the Chiefs of Staff on "Scandinavia, plans and preparations" (W.P.(40) 23), as a statement of the instructions and authority which the Service Departments require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made —
  - (a) for the despatch of a force via Narvik to the northern Swedish ore fields:
  - (b) for the occupation of the three ports in Southern Norway:
  - (c) for the despatch of a force to co-operate in the defence of southern Sweden:
 subject to such additions as might prove to be necessary in regard to the last-named force (See (iii) below):
- (iii) Invited the Chiefs of Staff to complete as early as possible the Report on the further instructions and authority (additional to those set out in para.8 of W.P.(40) 23) which the Service Departments would require to enable detailed plans and preparations to be made for (c) above (See para.10 of W.P.(40) 23):
- (iv) Authorised the Departments concerned to purchase the specialised stores and clothing required for arctic conditions (See para. 5 (c) of W.P.(40) 23). For the time being no shipping was to be taken up without reference to the War Cabinet:
- (v) Invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to initiate the arrangements necessary for a Meeting of the Supreme War Council to discuss Scandinavian policy with the French. In arranging the date for this Meeting the Foreign Secretary would no doubt bear in mind (a) that it was desirable that the Chiefs of Staff Report, referred to in (iii) above, should have been received before the date of this Meeting; and (b) that a decision is required by the 2nd February if the 44th and 42nd Divisions are to be retained in this country.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

19th January, 1940.

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COPY No. 12

W.M. (40) 18th CONCLUSIONS. MINUTE 11.

Confidential Annex.

FINLAND.

Operations  
by the Polish  
Navy.

In the course of the discussion on Item 10 THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the French Ambassador had referred to the possibility of naval operations in support of Finland in the neighbourhood of Petsamo. The French were not prepared to go to war with Russia at present, but M. Corbin had suggested that Polish naval forces might be used, perhaps assisted by French warships, suitably disguised and acting at night. The three destroyers and two submarines, which constituted the whole of the Polish Navy at present, were attached to the British Navy, but there was no reason, from the political point of view, why they should not operate as an independent Navy in support of Finland.

THE CHIEF OF NAVAL STAFF said that one of our submarines which had recently returned from the area in question had reported considerable activity at Murmansk and Petsamo. The Russians had no naval forces of any size there, and there would be no technical reasons why the Polish forces should not effect considerable damage to Russian shipping. The difficulty, however, would be that they would be working from British bases.

The War Cabinet agreed —

That the possibility of operations by the Polish Navy against the Russians in the Petsamo and Murmansk area should be examined by the Admiralty, in consultation as necessary with the Foreign Office, with a view to further discussion with the French.

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19th January, 1940.

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